

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is located on the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, which is the second largest island in the world. The country was divided between Germany and UK in 1885. In 1976, Papua New Guinea became an independent country. Some significant social tensions and social dysfunction are associated with religion in the country including violence against accused so-called 'witches', homophobia, and deteriorating Muslim-Christian relations.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>There is systematic religious privilege</u> <u>State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions</u>	<u>There is state funding of at least some religious schools</u>	<u>Religious groups control some public or social services</u>	<u>Criticism of religion is restricted in law or a de facto 'blasphemy' law is in effect</u>
<u>Official symbolic deference to religion</u>	<u>State-funded schools offer religious or ideological instruction with no secular or humanist alternative, but it is optional</u>		<u>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution protects the rights to religious freedom, conscience and to freedom of thought. There is no official state religion but the preamble of the Papua New Guinea constitution points to Christian principles which are the principle of the country.

In June 2016, the Constitutional Review commission halted a parliamentary proposal to 'prohibit the worship of non-Christian faiths' on the grounds that such a ban would be in violation of religious freedom.

Education and children's rights

Education in Papua New Guinea is a shared venture with other agencies. The Catholic Church is one of those agencies. After the independence of Papua New Guinea churches were pioneers of Western education in Papua New Guinea. In 1995 churches operated 20 professional schools nurses and other community health workers. The National Department of Education estimates that churches provide 29 % of lower secondary education.

<education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1166/Papua-New-Guinea-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>

Churches continue to run most schools and many health services, and the government provides support for these institutions. In addition, the government pays the salary and provides benefits for

the majority of teachers and health staff (generally members of the civil service) who work at these church-administered institutions, as it does with teachers and health staff of national institutions.

It is the policy of the Department of Education to set aside one hour per week for religious instruction in the public schools. Representatives of Christian churches teach the lessons, and students attend the class operated by the church of their parents' choice. Children whose parents do not wish them to attend the classes are excused.

Family, community and society

Demography

According to research by the Australian social and political science researcher Dr. Scott Flower, the Muslim minority in Papua New Guinea has grown by around 500% since 2001, due to an increase in conversions to Islam by indigenous people. The change has caused tensions in Christian-Muslim relations. Flower believes the change is driven by converts rejecting the influence of Christianity, which they associate with colonization and the destruction of the traditional culture.

<academia.edu/1231008/Christian_Muslim_relations_in_Papua_New_Guinea>

Witch hunts

Witch hunt in Papua New Guinea is still increasingly common. 80% of the population in Papua New Guinea still live in the bush. According to the Papua New Guinea's Constitutional and Law Reform Commission 150 attacks a year were reported in the Highlands province of Simbu alone. In February 2013 a 20-year old woman was accused of killing and eating the liver of a 6-year-old boy. She was tortured and burned alive in front of hundreds of people. Police said that they were outnumbered and couldn't save the woman. In Papua New Guinea witchcraft is often blamed for unexplained misfortunes.

<bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21363894>

<smh.com.au/world/witchhunt-20130419-2huha.html>

<freethinker.co.uk/2013/02/13/leo-igwes-bid-for-help-to-fight-superstition-in-papua-new-guinea-is-rebuffed/>

<theaustralian.com.au/news/world/Papua_New_Guinea-women-in-easter-torture/story-e6f9g6so-1226613576167?nk=38a8d23aab4a46e19948bbef0c05ff3b>

Homophobia

Papua New Guinea has strict anti-gay laws which "provide a 14 year sentence for consensual sex between same-sex couples". This induced many LGBT personalities to seek for asylum in other countries.

<gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/gay-asylum-seekers-fear-persecution-under-papua-new-guinea-s-anti-gay-laws-13108.html>

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Freedom of speech is generally guaranteed and the government respects this freedom as well as freedom of media in practice.

Blasphemy censorship

However, Papua New Guinea does prohibit "blasphemous" content in published material.

The Classification of Publication (Censorship) Act 1989 defines an “objectionable publication” as one which inter alia depicts “matters of sex, drug misuse or addiction, crime, cruelty, blasphemy, immorality, violence or revolting or abhorrent phenomena in a manner that is likely to be offensive to a reasonable adult person and is undesirable in the interest of the public”.

<wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=199835>

The usual sentence for breaking the law is confiscation and destruction of prohibited goods, but the courts can impose a fine or even a prison term up to 2 years. It is unclear whether the prison sentence would apply to specifically “blasphemous” content in and of itself.

Press and online freedoms

There is no government news agency in Papua New Guinea but there are several privately operated news agencies.

However, there are concerns about restrictions on social media introduced in 2015.

<bc.net.au/news/2015-10-22/png-government-cracks-down-on-social-media/6877024>